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**MARKAZIY OSIYO DAVLATLARI TASHQI SIYOSATIDA RAQAMLI DIPLOMATIYA
(O‘ZBEKISTON VA QOZOG‘ISTON MISOLIDA)****ЦИФРОВАЯ ДИПЛОМАТИЯ ВО ВНЕШНЕЙ ПОЛИТИКЕ СТРАН ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ
АЗИИ
(НА ПРИМЕРЕ УЗБЕКИСТАНА И КАЗАХСТАНА)****DIGITAL DIPLOMACY IN THE FOREIGN POLICY OF CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES
(USING THE EXAMPLE OF UZBEKISTAN AND KAZAKHSTAN)****Allamurodov Bekmurod Xolmurod o‘g‘li** 

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Annotatsiya

Bugungi kunda ko‘plab davlatlar tashqi siyosatini amalga oshirish vositasi sifatida raqamli texnologiyalardan foydalanishga katta e‘tibor qaratmoqda. Xususan, internet, ijtimoiy tarmoqlar, ommaviy axborot vositalari, yangi aloqa kanallari kabi zamonaviy axborot-kommunikatsiya yutuqlarini keng ommalashtirish davlatning tashqi siyosiy vazifalarini amalga oshirishning asosiy vositasiga aylandi. Ushbu ishning maqsadi xalqaro munosabatlar doirasida yangi hodisa hisoblangan raqamli diplomatiya tushunchasini tahlil qilishdan iborat. Shuningdek, maqolada Qozog‘iston Respublikasi va O‘zbekiston diplomatik vakolatxonalari tomonidan raqamli vositalardan foydalanish jarayonlari taqqoslanadi. Statistika ma‘lumotlar har bir mamlakat uchun taqdim etilgan bo‘lib, bu yuqoridagi mamlakatlar diplomatiyasidagi raqamli tendentsiyalarning eng to‘liq rasmini olish imkonini berdi.

Аннотация

На сегодняшний день многие страны уделяют большое внимание использованию цифровых технологий в качестве инструмента реализации своей внешней политики. В частности, широкая популярность современных информационно-коммуникационных достижений, таких как Интернет, социальные сети, СМИ, новые каналы связи, стала основным инструментом реализации внешнеполитических задач государства. Целью данной работы является анализ концепции цифровой дипломатии, которая считается новым явлением в рамках международных отношений. Также в статье сравниваются процессы использования цифровых инструментов дипломатическими представительствами Республики Казахстан и Узбекистана. По каждой из стран представлены статистические данные, которые позволили получить наиболее полное представление о цифровых тенденциях в дипломатии вышеуказанных стран.

Abstract

Today, an increasing number of countries are focusing on the use of digital technologies as a means of implementing their foreign policy. The main tool for the implementation of the state's foreign policy goals, in particular, is the widespread adoption of modern information and communication technologies, such as the Internet, social networks and new communication channels. This article aims to explore ideas such as digital diplomacy in the context of contemporary international relations. In addition, the author of the study conducted a comparative examination of the participation of the diplomatic services of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in the field of digital diplomacy. During the study, the national and international rankings of these countries were evaluated and statistical data's for each of the above-mentioned countries were shown.

Kalit so‘zlar: Raqamli diplomatiya, tashqi siyosat, yumshoq kuch, Qozog‘iston, O‘zbekiston, axborot-kommunikatsiya texnologiyalari.

Ключевые слова: Цифровая дипломатия, внешняя политика, мягкая сила, Казахстан, Узбекистан, информационно-коммуникационные технологии.

Key Words: Digital diplomacy, foreign policy, soft power, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, information and communication technologies.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, the usage of digital technologies has emerged as one of the primary priorities in states' communication within foreign affairs. Specifically, digital diplomacy has evolved

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into a fast and convenient method for governments to express their official relations with political processes occurring on the international stage. The Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Uzbekistan have actively engaged in these developments. Analysis of social media, the Internet, and social networks suggests that there will be a growing demand in the coming years for modernization within the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. This involves leveraging various opportunities offered by the IT sphere to enhance the implementation of digital diplomacy. Taking all these factors into account, this article aims to analyze the concept of "digital diplomacy," a relatively new phenomenon in the realm of foreign affairs. Another goal is to examine the stages of digital technology implementation in the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Uzbekistan, as well as the application of digital diplomacy in the domain of foreign affairs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The author has analyzed theoretical approaches to the concept "digital diplomacy", which considered a new phenomenon in the field of foreign affairs. In order to achieve objective result of the research, the methods include content analysis, comparative analysis and factual analysis of data provided by international organizations on the topic of digitalization in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

The author's research materials consist of scientific works of the Anglo-Saxon scholars such as B. Hawking "Diplomacy in the Digital Age", I. Manor. Digital diplomacy: Theory and practice and Russian scientists such as Kubyshev A.I., Tsvetkova N.A. Public diplomacy

The objectivity of the conclusions is based on widespread use of contemporary and new materials and information provided by international organizations, assessment's, opinions and forecasts of famous authors and scholars studying the processes of digitalization of Internet spaces and social networks. The facts and processes of digitalization of the political sphere and Internet space in modern Kazakhstan and the new Uzbekistan were also analyzed. Information was used from the official websites of Facebook, Instagram and data from other open sources of the Foreign Ministries of the two countries.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The term "Digital Diplomacy" was first mentioned in the book "Digital Diplomacy: U.S. Foreign Policy in the Information Age" by American journalist W. Dizard. The author analyses the use of information technologies in Foreign and Military Affairs of the state, he also presents a personally developed program for the US government. According to him, in the context of developing the role of non-governmental and transnational organizations "digital diplomacy" is presented as a sophisticated but successful method of communication [1, P232]. The term digital diplomacy considered new for the contemporary scientific sources and in many aspects correlated to the terms as: "cyber diplomacy", (Barston, 2014), "social diplomacy", "virtual diplomacy", "e-diplomacy" (Hocking, Melissen, Riordan and Sharp, 2012), "diplomacy 2.0" (Harris, 2013), which are interpreted and used as concepts that have the same meaning.

Though the concept of digital diplomacy emerged in the political sphere at the beginning of the 20th century and remains in use today, political scientists have yet to agree on a single definition for the term

In particular, representatives of the Anglo-Saxon school, such as M. Holmes, E. Segev, I. Manor, A. Ross, D. Lewis, C. Bjola, define the concept of digital diplomacy as a tool of "soft power" and emphasize that it should be used in international politics and diplomacy, based on mutual trust and values [2, pp. 89-108].

Representatives of the second research group - Russian scholars - describe digital diplomacy as a tool for shaping public opinion in the process of making political and economic decisions. Specifically, A.V. Krikunov used digital diplomacy in the sense of applying modern information and communication technologies for carrying out diplomatic and foreign policy tasks, and his contemporary, E.S. Zinovieva, referred to it as the broad use of information and communication technologies (ICT), including new media tools, social networks, blogs, and similar media platforms on the global network, in addressing the current tasks of the foreign policy agenda of state bodies [3, p. 92]

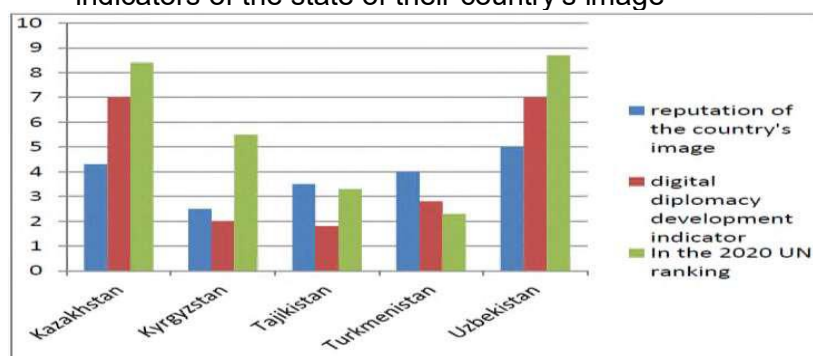
ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Modern processes of globalization, information and communication technologies in developed countries, the effective development of the Internet, and the increasing role of non-

governmental organizations in international relations encourage the widespread use of advanced technologies, systems, and mechanisms. As a new form of using "soft power" in foreign policy, the term "digital diplomacy" is often employed in the foreign policy of the world's leading countries: the USA, Canada, Russia, Japan, France, Iran, and others. Central Asian countries are no exception.

It's important to highlight that the adoption of digital tools is contingent upon a country's existing ICT infrastructure, notably its Internet coverage and connection speeds. A country's national strategy, which emphasizes digitization, efficient public service delivery, and the implementation of e-government, mirrors its approach to digital diplomacy. Notably, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan stand out as considerably more advanced in this realm compared to other nations in Central Asia. As per the "E-Government Knowledge Database" by the United Nations, these two countries lead the Central Asian region in both the "E-Government Development Index" and the "E-Participation Index." Kazakhstan, for instance, is positioned 28th globally out of 193 countries, with a rating of 0.8628% in the "E-Government Development Index."

Figure 1. Indicators of the development of digital tools of Central Asian countries and indicators of the state of their country's image



Source: Goals of development of digital diplomacy and actions-results in this regard in Central Asian countries. *Международный научный журнал* № 10 (100), часть 2 «Новости образования: исследование в XXI веке» май, 2023

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In accordance with the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated March 7, 2002, "On the Diplomatic Service of the Republic of Kazakhstan," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs develops the main directions of Kazakhstan's foreign policy and implements international initiatives. According to an official statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kazakhstan informs the international community about its position on international issues and foreign policy initiatives aimed at the political, socio-economic, and cultural-humanitarian development of the country. Modern information and communication technologies and traditional diplomacy are employed [9].

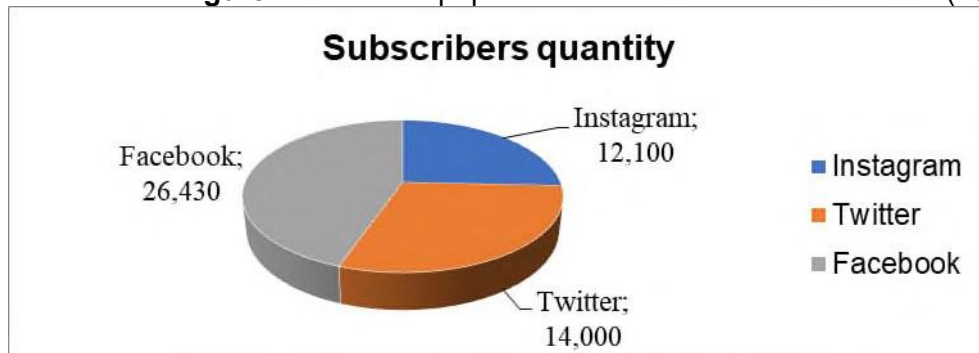
The "Digital Kazakhstan" program for 2018-2022 was introduced by the Government of Kazakhstan on January 31, 2017, establishing the first legislative framework for digitalization in the country. The aim of this program was to accelerate Kazakhstan's economic development and improve the quality of life for its citizens through the short-term use of digital technologies. The "Digital Kazakhstan" initiative covers five key areas:

1. Digitization of economic sectors
2. Transition to a digital state
3. Implementation of the digital Silk Road
4. Development of human capital

5. Creation of an innovative ecosystem[10].

These reforms, along with the use of digital technologies in the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Kazakhstani embassies abroad, contribute to the digitalization processes in Kazakhstan. Many Kazakhstani embassies abroad have their own websites and social networks. The number of active internet users in Kazakhstan in January 2023 was 17.3 million users (about 90% of the population).

Figure 2. The most popular social networks in Kazakhstan (2023)

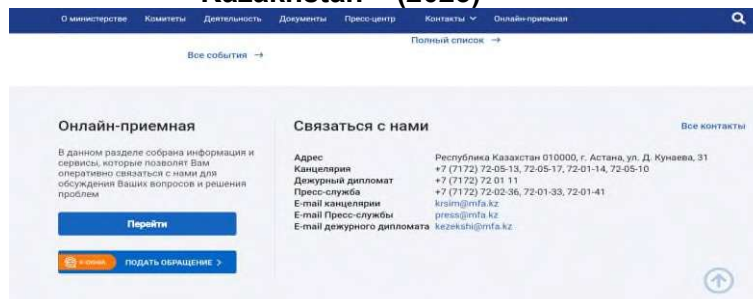


As of 2023, the internet usage rate in Kazakhstan was 90.9% of the total population. The number of active social media users is 11.85 million people, which equals 60.8 percent of the total population. "Facebook" is the most popular social network among Kazakhstanis, with 2.30 million users, followed by "Instagram," "Linkedin," and "Twitter"[11].

Kazakhstan state institutions also expand their presence on the global internet. Nursultan Nazarbayev, the first President of Kazakhstan, was the first to create his official page on "Facebook," "Twitter," and in 2014 on "Instagram." Today, all ministries, agencies, and other state bodies have their websites. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan has made it possible to use current events in foreign policy on social networks, particularly by posting on Facebook and Twitter information resources.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan is developing digitization not only through the use of social networks but also by creating mobile applications. For instance, in 2017, the "SmartTravelKZ" app was launched for citizens traveling abroad. The app contains information about countries and travel advice[12]. "Smart TravelKZ" is not the only program developed by the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan. There are other mobile applications. Specifically, the app "Kazakh Land of the Great Steppe" provides information about the history, geography, economy, and politics of Kazakhstan. For tourists and those interested in learning about Kazakhstan, this app can be of great practical value. Moreover, through such digital initiatives, Kazakhstan enables the development of public diplomacy[13]. Although programs promoting the country's brand have been created, integration with the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has not yet been established.

Figure 3. Official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2023)



Source: Official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan: <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/mfa?lang=kk>

The official page of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs covers issues such as relations between countries, mutual visits, citizen services, visa issuance, and citizenship acquisition. However, there is no national branding information or specialized websites.

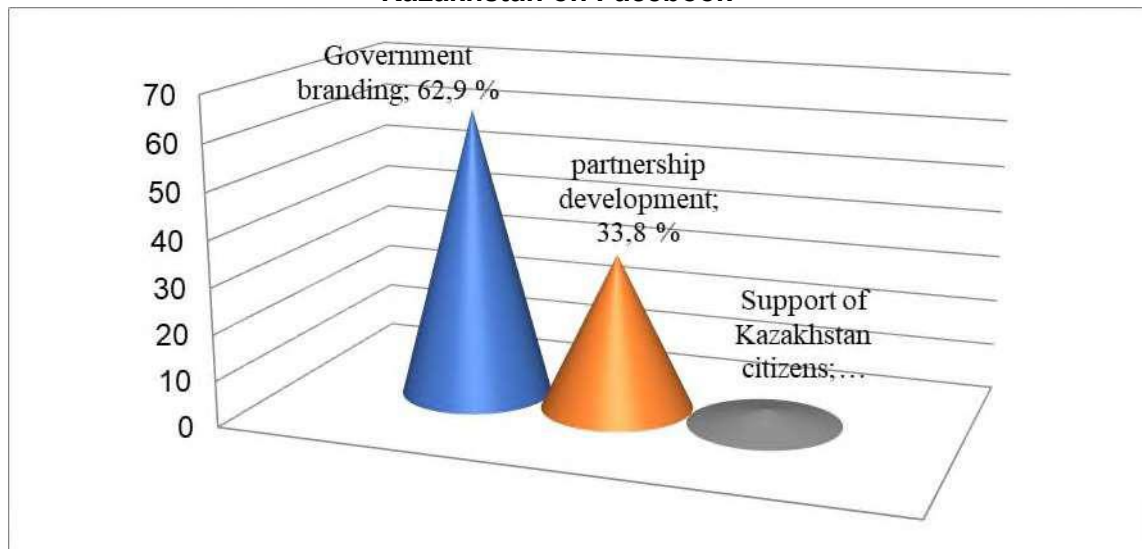
Based on the analysis of official pages and approaches presented on the Ministry's website, two directions can be identified:

1. Information about the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, i.e., mass propaganda activities.

2. Citizen services. Complaints and claims and other services, including visa issuance to citizens and foreigners, citizenship acquisition, and investigative actions [4, p. 92].

According to the statistics above, "Facebook" is the social network with the most users in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Figure 3. Topics on the pages of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Facebook



Source: Botakoz Kazbek and Aisulu Almash. Facebook as a Digital Diplomacy Tool: Case of Kazakhstan. Proceedings of the 6th European Conference on Social Media. University of Brighton UK 13-14 June 2019. P-156

According to content analysis of Facebook pages presented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the information is primarily used to promote the country and its culture, history, tourist destinations, as well as its political position internationally. Most materials are dedicated to these topics and mainly presented as reposts of official messages from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Administration of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and the media. According to the amount of material posted on Facebook, the "Cooperation and development of cooperation" department provided information about a bilateral meeting (not only at the level of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and embassies but also at the level of presidents and country representatives). In analyzing the "Support for citizens and the diaspora of Kazakhstan" block, it was found that this collection contains the least number of posts. However, it is important to note that this block consists mainly of materials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and embassies. This block collects information about various events involving citizens of Kazakhstan, students of the host country, and representatives of the Kazakh diaspora [5, p. 156]. Most posts by embassies and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Facebook are primarily aimed at creating state branding.

The process of implementing digital diplomacy in the Republic of Uzbekistan began in 2016. The development of digital diplomacy in the country, the radical improvement of the system of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, as well as the Action Strategy for five priority areas of development of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2017-2021 and the Concept of Administrative Reform in the Republic of Uzbekistan based on certain tasks[14].

According to Twiplomacy, networks with active social media users in Uzbekistan include the press service of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov, the gov.uz portal, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [6, p. 58-61].

The press service of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev is among the leading officials actively using social networks. He has over 39,000 followers on Twitter, over 3 million followers on

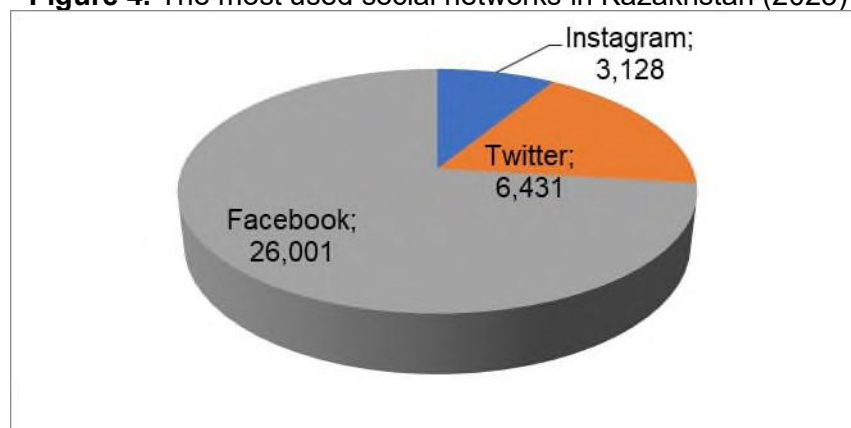
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Instagram, and a Facebook page with more than 242,000 users. The president's press service is an active user in the following areas:

- 1) Among the most popular world leaders:
 - 3 million users, 16th place.
- 2) Among the most famous leaders with the largest number of connections:
 - interactions - 22nd place with 9 million users.
- 3) Among the most successful users in the world - 39th place.

As of 2023, Uzbekistan has 26.74 million Internet users (an increase of 8.84 million compared to 2020), with a global network usage rate of 76.6 percent. Today, the number of social network users is 5.35 million (an increase of 1.94 million compared to 2020), which corresponds to 15.3% of the total population.

Figure 4. The most used social networks in Kazakhstan (2023)



Source: Based on DataReportal data. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-uzbekistan>

As of early 2023, Uzbekistan had activated 31.84 million mobile cellular connections, equivalent to 91.2% of the total population.

According to information published on Meta's [15] advertising resources, as of early 2023, Facebook has 1.65 million users in Uzbekistan. The number of Instagram users in Uzbekistan is 4.20 million. Twitter has 148,700 users in Uzbekistan[16].

To enhance the stability of state bodies on social networks, a systematic approach is necessary. As Hawkins and Melissen assert, four factors can influence the successful implementation of digitization in a foreign policy department (Ministry of Foreign Affairs):

Firstly, the government should consider the possibility of internal structural support by creating a department consisting of digitalization experts.

Secondly, an "effective digital champion" is needed - a person who actively supports and assists in the development of digitization.

The third factor is professional staff. This requires training diplomats in network management and disseminating information among various groups of people, among other related nuances that must be considered. [7, pp. 49-50]

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the above, considering the alternative interpretations presented, we understand digital diplomacy as a new form of implementing international relations, in which the role of information and communication technologies can be seen as a crucial factor in executing diplomatic tasks. Digital diplomacy is vital for informing millions of foreigners about a country's active foreign policy and extensive reforms without additional expenses, and for understanding the sentiments and attitudes of the public. Digital capabilities significantly impact the effectiveness of the foreign policy activities of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

From the comparative analysis conducted, the author concludes that for a country to successfully implement its foreign policy using digital diplomacy on the international stage, it needs to accomplish the following tasks:

Firstly, Uzbekistan needs to increase internet speed and access to social networks.

Secondly, organize digital diplomacy courses for all diplomats and officials in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

Thirdly, modern information and communication technologies have not been widely adopted in the activities of diplomatic missions and consular institutions of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan abroad.

Fourthly, to address this issue, the official pages of the foreign ministries of the two countries on social networks should provide extensive coverage of consular services and information that will offer a comprehensive view of the state's status.

Create effective means and mechanisms to protect the population from the penetration of harmful and destructive ideas through the Internet.

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